

The Athenian Mercury:

Saturday, July 18. 1691.

Quest. 1. **G**entlemen, your Form of Prayer for the Ladies Choice of Husbands is like to make but half of the Age happy, unless you continue your Goodness by affording the like assistance to the other half, I mean your own Sex in choosing Wives; which we expect at your Hands with the first Opportunity, for fear the Ladies should get the start of us?

Ans^r. When you find your Devotion warm with thoughts of this Nature you may change the following Character into a Prayer for—One whose Piety and Virtue has measured the Chains of Providence, and accordingly makes a due Estimate of all Occurrences—Whose Soul is too great to be crush'd under the weight of Adverse Storms, and yet at the same time of a soft, easie, affable Temper—Who is a stranger to disguise, yet not so free and open as to give grounds for Contempt, One to whom Nature has been liberal in good Features and Proportions of Body, but yet with a fairer Mind, Witt without Abuses, Modest without Weakness, Jealous of nothing but the decrease of her Kindness to you: Generous, yet not profuse. One whose Prudence can secure you from an Inspection into her Family-Accounts, and divert the Curse of trifling into Poverty. A good Housewife that can appear as great in the World with one hundred Pounds a Year as her Neighbours with two. One who believes her Person should be a Figure, and her Portion a Coffer, which added to her advances the Summ, but alone signifies nothing; rather the Petr of her own deserts, than barely the Off-spring of Virtuous Parents—One that without the Tryal of her Virtue can out of a Principle of Generosity be just to your Bed—Whose Virtue, Wit and Modesty can rather be imitated than equal'd by her Neighbours.

In short, One whose Carriage exceeds this Character, and attains to that of the Apostle, 1 Pet. chap. 3. or that of the Wisest of Men, Prov. 31. from Ver. 10. to the End.

Quest. 2. What are we to think of the little clinking Noise called a Death-watch? To which we add one from another Hand. I have been for some time since accompanied in my Chamber with the Noise of what the common People call a Death-watch: One Evening above the rest I sat down by a Table, from whence the Noise proceeded, and laid my Watch upon the same, I perceiv'd to my Admiration that the sound made by this invisible Automaton (if such it be) was louder than that of the Artificial Machine: Its Vibrations will fall as regular, but withal quicker; I struck a Box upon the Table, whence I am confident the Noise came, and here-upon it immediately ceased striking. After some small Intermision it began again, I moved the Box a second time, and it was presently silent: Upon the third Repetition of its Motion, I opened the said Box, and although I used the most diligent and scrupulous search to ground a Conjecture of what it might be, yet it escaped my sight. I have since heard two of them together in the same place—Now I desire to be satisfied if this Noise might proceed from any Insect? if in the Affirmative, I would gladly know from what; as likewise whether the Prefage of Death ground'd thereon has any other Basis than Superstition. If in the Negative, I would gladly know from whence it is, and what is your Opinion thereon?

Ans^r. We our selves could give several related Instances of this Nature, but shall offer only one which we Experimentally know to be Matter of Fact; 'tis this: There was such a Noise as this heard in a plain Wall, where there was a little hole eaten with a Worm; we us'd what Endeavours we could to get the little Disturber out of its hole, and after some time, with a little Care, and a Paper Trap,

we took it, and it was only a small sort of a Spider. We are informed that the same Noise is effected by a small Grub or Worm, but whether true or not we can't affirm, because we have no certain Instance. It's a common thing in some places to hear so many together, that by the confused mixture of their sounds, they are not to be Numbred. I doubt not but the Querist look'd into the Box, when he ought to have look'd into the Wood of the Box. We cannot conceive (though we hear of many Instances) that they are any thing else but Insects; for a Spirit needs not fear or desist at our striking upon the place; nor that they commonly are Signs of Death, for those Persons who dye out of such Families would have dyed, if these supposed Monitors had been absent: Not but that upon some particular Cases God Almighty may make use of Spiders, Crickets, &c. to warn us of our approaching End, as I knew a Family never without one Cricket before some one dy'd out of it; another, that an unknown Voice always call'd the Person that was to dye; another, that had something like a Wand struck upon the Walls; and another where some Bough always falls off a particular Tree a little before Death: but these are particular unaccountable Instances. Ordinarily such Talk is Nonsense, and depends more upon Fancy than any thing else; 'tis all one to a good Man whether he has a Summons or no, for he is always ready either with or without?

Quest. 3. What is the cause of Bashfulness?

Ans^r. Some have prettily call'd Blushing the Colour of Virtue, but perhaps not with overmuch reason; for why should a Man be sham'd of any thing but what is ill: 'Tis weakness of Judgment, a Misunderstanding of things, a confounding a false Notion of Good and Evil, want of Converse, and the Prejudice of Education, that are the Causes, and not Vertue, which by how much the greater it is, by so much 'tis the more Bold, Brave and Daring. 'Tis only excusable in Children, as being a Sign of a flexible easie disposition, which if well managed, is the most susceptible of the deepest impressions of Vertue.

Quest. 4. How is it naturally possible, that an Aged Man nigh an hundred years, both blind and Lame, besides many other Imperfections incident to Old Age, should on a sudden recover his former Vigour and Senses, in as high a degree of perfection, as when he was but Forty Years old?

Ans^r. The usual reparations of Nature might by some new Course of Dyet, or other Accident, meet in such a due and proper Crisis, as to effect a Rejuvenescency, or a renewing of Age, or the God of Nature might immediately concern himself in a few such Instances, for some ends best known to himself. We are satisfied by very good Authority of some such Examples, we shall only mention the following—Fuller in his Worthies has set down a Letter sent him from Alderman Atkins his Son thus.—There is an Acquaintance of mine, and a Friend of yours, who certified me of your desire of being satisfied of the Truth of that Relation I made concerning the old Minister in the North. It fortuned that in my Journey to Scotland, I lay at Alnwick in Northumberland, and understanding from the Host of the House where I lodg'd, that this Minister lived within three miles of that place, I took my Horse after Dinner, and rode thither to hear him preach for my own satisfaction; I found him in the Desk, where he read unto us some part of the Common Prayer, some of the Psalms, and two Chapters without Spectacles. The Bible out of which he read the chapters was a very small Printed Bible; he went afterward into the Pulpit, where he pray'd and preach'd unto us about an hour and an half, his Text was, Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and all other things shall be added to you. In my poor Judgment he made an excellent Sermon, and went clearly through without the help of any Notes. After Sermon I went with him to his House, where I propos'd these Questions to him: Whether the Book Printed concerning the change of his Hair was a Truth? Whether or no he had

new set of Teeth come? Whether or no his Eye-sight never fail'd him? and whether in any measure he found his strength renewed to him? He answered me distinctly to all this, and told me, he understood the News Book reported his Hair to become a dark brown again, but falsely, as he took off his Cap, and shew'd me his Hair, like a Childs, but rather flaxen, than either brown or gray; for his Teeth, he has three come within these two Years, nor yet to their perfection; whilst he bred them he was very ill, forty Years he could not read the biggest print without Spectacles; and now he bless'd God there is no Print, nor Writing so small, but he could read without them. For his strength, he thinks it as great as twenty Year since. Not long since, he walked to Alowick to Dinner, and back again six North Country Miles. He is now one hundred and ten Years of Age, and ever since last May a hearty Body, very chearful, yet sleeps much. He had five Children after he was eighty Years Old, four of them lully Lasses, now living with him, the other dyed lately, his Wife is scarce fifty Years of Age, he writes himself Michael Vivan: He is a Scottish Man, born near Aberdeen, I forgot the Towns Name where he is now Pastor, he hath been three fifty years.

Windsor, Sept.
28. 1657.

Your assured Loving Friend,

Thomas Atkins.

Quest. 5. Sometimes since I entreated the Solution of the following Queries, I do still earnestly desire your thoughts of it, viz. Whether the Soul of Man be by Traduction, or immediate Infusion; if the former, what tolerable conceptions may we have of the way and manner of a Body's begetting a Spirit; if the latter, how comes it to be defiled with Original Sin?

Ans. Our Delay in this and many other ingenious Questions, is not because we pass any over that are worth the Answering, but from the Multitudes which are forced upon us notwithstanding our frequent Advertisements to the contrary, all which shall have their Answer in Order, and be dispatch'd as fast as possible; and in the Preface to our Second Volume we shall print several Standing Rules for all our Querists, which if punctually observed by 'em, they'll not only have their Expectations fully answered from time to time, but our Athenian Project will be thereby rendred more serviceable to the Publick. We have formerly said something of Traduction, vide Vol. 1. N. 12. Q. 3. But to this Question we now answer, That the Intellectual Soul of Man is not by Traduction, but the Sensitive only, which is common to other living Creatures, either by Seminal Traduction, or the Generative Power, which lies hid in the Putrefaction of Elementary Bodies, as we find some Creatures produced of Mud Filth, &c. or according to that in Gen. 1. Producant Aquae reptile Animae viventes; but the intellectual Soul is an Immaterial Substance, and 'tis impossible for an Active Power, which is in Matter to extend its Action to the Production of an Immaterial Effect, because the Intellectual Principle in Man is a Principle transcending Matter, and therefore it must have its Existens and Creation from some Immaterial Being, viz. God. — Nor can I see a necessity for the Souls being defil'd with Original Sin, (considered in the Abstract) but all the Pollution it receives is by means of the Body, for it is not of the Nature of Angels, who act by the Power of their Will, for the Soul Acts by the Senses, by which it is defil'd, as a Man is said to have contracted a Womans Debts when he makes her his Wife and Companion.

Quest. 6. Why doth the Rain fall in distinct drops? — Why is there no Rain in Egypt, and why doth the River Nilus supply that defect by its overflowing?

Ans. For the First Part of the Question, viz. why doth the Rain fall in distinct drops, see Vol. 1. N. 2. Q. 3. In the Question of Spouts. To the Second, Why there is no Rain in Egypt, &c. we answer, That the excessive Heat of India and Ethiopia draws thither those Clouds that would otherwise discharge themselves from Saaken-Arhibe to Bagdamdel, which as we are informed, are the Lairs of Non-Raining; but yet falling above Egypt towards the Source of Nilus for a continuance of six

Months together, (See Vol. 2. Number 11. about the Trade Winds) must necessarily cause such an overflowing, and fertilizing of the Country of Egypt, Masoura, Moka, &c. which perhaps may be helped on by the fermentations of the Nitrous Soyl, in which those Countries abound.

Quest. 7. Why is Yawning catching?

Ans. Perhaps upon Examination it will be found to be the most Natural Act of the Passions, if they are at all concerned in it, for I can Yawn when I please, but cannot laugh, cry, &c. when I please, although very near the same contraction of the Muscles happens to Laughing and Yawning; Mankind is Sympathetick, one Body's laughing may provoke anothers, although the second perhaps knows not the reason why the first laughs; therefore 'tis no wonder why a lesser Action is Sympathetick, when a greater of the same Nature is, the reason of which only lyes in the parity of Nature.

Quest. 8. Why dying Persons fold the Sheets, or other Linnen?

Ans. 'Tis in intermitting Fits, Delirias, Feavors, Alienations of Mind, by which Objects are misrepresented, at which time Nature finding its self near its Exit, clings and grasps at any stay, though it be but the feeble fumbling of the next thing to it.

Quest. 9. What is the best way to prevent the Ruine and Debauchery of Truth?

Ans. To inculcate into them an early Impress of Virtue, the benefit of good Companions, and by keeping a strict guard over their Actions, till they are habituated to Vertue, and then it will be as hard a task to make them ill, as it is for an habituated ill Man to be made good.

Quest. 10. What is that which makes the Mouth to water at the sight of a Lemon, green Gooseberries, &c.

Ans. The Eye having represented these to the Fancy, which assisted with the Memory, recollects former Ideas of the Effects such a sharpness had heretofore upon the Taste, which immediately puts that Sense into motion, and irritates the Saliva or Spittle as in the Question is mentioned.

One of our Querists hints at an odd Dream he lately had, if he sends us the full Account of it, he shall have our Thoughts upon it.

* * The several Questions sent us this Week concerning Mice, Pump-water, Secret Murder, the Queen of Sheba, as also that concerning Duelling, &c. shall be Answered at the end of our second Volume, and we hope to the Challengers satisfaction.

Advertisements.

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Pray forbear sending any more Questions, till we give further Orders for it; and when you have notice to send again, direct your Letters either to Mr. Smith's Coffee-house in Stocks-market, or else to the Rotterdam Coffee-house in Finch-lane, at which last place you may constantly meet with the French and Dutch News, either in the Original or Translated.